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Secretariat

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Editorial directive

Prepared by Editorial Control

To: All those concerned with drafting and editing United Nations documents and publications

Subject: **Gender-neutral language**

1. The purpose of the present issuance is to remind all members of the Secretariat to pay maximum attention to the need to use gender-neutral expressions when writing or speaking in their official capacity.

2. Because of rapidly changing practice and the linguistic diversity within the Organization, it is not possible to issue global guidelines on gender-neutral usage. However, in the absence of a specific decision to the contrary by a legislative body of the United Nations, the policy in each language is to follow, to the greatest extent possible, the best practice in the outside world – generally, the usage adopted by respected writers and journalists. In that regard, staff members may wish to keep abreast of trends in this area as reflected in the various commercial style manuals as well as publications of other international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Amnesty International.

3. In view of the complexity of the issue in a multicultural environment, the various language units of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services will develop internal norms and will be available to advise staff members who wish to consult them on gender-related drafting problems. Queries from members of delegations are also welcome.

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